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FM AMEMBASSY BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8035
INFO ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS

UNCLAS BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN 000550

DEPT FOR EAP/PIMBS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SULTAN'S ELDEST SON MADE CROWN PRINCE;
PRINCE JEFRI VOWS TO DEFEND HIS INTERESTS

REF: BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN 00523

1. SUMMARY: THE SULTAN'S ELDEST SON, PRINCE BILLAH, WAS MADE CROWN PRINCE IN A VERY TRADITIONAL CEREMONY ON AUGUST 11. THE WIDELY EXPECTED RETURN OF PRINCE JEFRI DID NOT HAPPEN. IN A SECOND INTERVIEW WITH REUTER'S JEFRI VOWED TO DEFEND HIS INTERESTS IF THEY ARE THREATENED. END SUMMARY.

2. THE CEREMONY TO PROCLAIM YANG TERAMAT MULIA PADUKA SERI DULI PENGIRAN MUDA HAJI AL-MUHTADEE BILLAH AS CROWN PRINCE WAS ATTENDED BY THOUSANDS OF SENIOR BRUNEIANS AND MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORP. INVITED GUESTS INCLUDED THE SON OF KING HUSSAIN OF JORDAN. AFTER THE CEREMONY AT WHICH THE SULTAN PRESENTED HIS SON WITH A KERIS (MALAY DAGGER) TO MARK HIS INAUGURATION, THE PRINCE WAS CONVEYED IN PROCESSION THROUGH THE CAPITAL ON AN ELABORATE, GOLD PLATED CARRIAGE. THE PRINCE NOW CARRIES THE TITLE DULI YANG TERAMAT MULIA PADUKA SERI PENGIRAN MUDA MAHKOTA HAJI AL-MUHTADEE BILLAH. IT IS EXPECTED THAT IN THE NEAR FUTURE THE CROWN PRINCE WILL BE APPOINTED TO AN INFLUENTIAL GOVERNMENT POST.

3. IT HAD BEEN WIDELY RUMORED FOR SEVERAL WEEKS THAT PRINCE JEFRI WOULD BEGIN TO MEND HIS RIFT WITH THE SULTAN AND RETURN TO BRUNEI FOR THE CROWNING. HOWEVER, SOURCES SAY THAT NEGOTIATIONS TO INVITE JEFRI TO RETURN BROKE DOWN. THE WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12 BORNEO BULLETIN PUBLISHED A REUTER'S ARTICLE WHICH REPORTED A STATEMENT FROM PRINCE JEFRI, GIVEN ON THE EVE OF THE ROYAL INAUGURATION. THE STATEMENT READ "ON THE OCCASION OF HIS INVESTITURE, I WISH TO OFFER CROWN PRINCE BILLAH MY CONGRATULATIONS AND WARMEST GOOD WISHES. I REGRET THAT I AM UNABLE TO ATTEND THE CEREMONY, BUT THE RECENT DISTURBING TURN OF EVENTS IN BRUNEI HAS MADE THIS IMPOSSIBLE." HE ALSO REPORTEDLY SAID THAT FOR THE PRESENT HE PREFERRED TO BE LEFT ALONE, BUT THAT HE WOULD DEFEND VIGOROUSLY HIS POSITION AND THE INTERESTS OF HIS FAMILY IF FORCED TO DO SO. THE PRINCE IS REPORTEDLY IN THE UNITED STATES.

4. IN THE THURSDAY, AUGUST 13 BORNEO BULLETIN, MALAI HASSAN CONTINUED HIS REPORTING ON THE PUBLIC SUPPORT THE SULTAN IS RECEIVING FOR HIS STANCE ON THE AMEDEO/PRINCE JEFRI AFFAIR. UNNAMED BRUNEIAN COMMUNITY LEADERS WERE QUOTED AS SAYING "HIS MAJESTY HAS MADE IT VERY CLEAR THAT NO ONE, NOT EVEN HIS FAMILY MEMBERS, IS ABOVE THE LAW AND HE IS CLEARLY COMMITTED TO HIS DIVINE DUTY TO LEAD AND GUIDE THE COUNTRY ON THE NATION'S WELL-TESTED MIB (MALAY ISLAMIC MONARCHY) PHILOSOPHY." MALAI HASSAN ALSO REITERATED THE BRUNEI GOVERNMENT'S STATEMENTS, ISSUED BY ITS INFORMATION DEPARTMENT, THAT BRUNEI IS NOT BEING INFLUENCED BY FOREIGN EXTREMISTS.

5. COMMENT: THE DEEP RIFT BETWEEN THE SULTAN AND PRINCE JEFRI DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE ON THE MEND. THERE IS SPECULATION THAT THE SULTAN IS ABOUT TO APPROPRIATE PRINCE JEFRI'S OIL EXPLORATION JOINT VENTURE COMPANIES, ONE OF WHICH IS EXPECTED TO BEGIN PRODUCTION NEXT YEAR. (NOTE: UNOCAL'S WORK IN BRUNEI IS ASSOCIATED WITH JEFRI'S OFFSHORE PROPERTIES.) PRINCE JEFRI VOWS TO DEFEND HIS BUSINESS INTERESTS BUT

IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW HE WILL DO SO.

RASE